

# IOWA TRAILS 2000

## IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE PARK POLICY 2000

### STATEMENT OF GUIDING PRINCIPLES

As the State agency charged with the primary responsibility for natural resource protection and management, the DNR will carry that responsibility into the task of providing for the recreational pursuits of OHV riders.

The first consideration of the DNR in any decision to buy, lease and or develop a tract as an OHV facility will be to assure that the piece of land which will become an OHV riding area is not disturbed and degraded so that it does not contain native plant communities, cultural resources or critical habitat for threatened and endangered species or species of special concern.

To that end, the DNR will target previously disturbed areas for OHV facilities. Previously disturbed areas include but are not limited to agricultural lands (including logging and pasturing of timbered ground), mining or other intensive land uses that have resulted in the elimination of high-quality natural areas, native plant communities, critical habitats and cultural resources. If a tract contains fragments of high quality natural areas they will be managed and contained as an off limit site.

In addressing the concerns of "neighbors", the DNR will include consideration for those landowners immediately adjoining the tract under consideration. In addition, the concerns of neighbors will include those along access routes to the park and those within the viewshed and within earshot of the proposed OHV Park.

A local sponsoring political subdivision must be willing to provide local assurances that concerns with law enforcement or other potential detracting uses of the OHV park will receive local attention and that they cooperate with state personnel to address those issues.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the State OHV Task Force until such time that review is deemed unnecessary by the task force participants.

### DEFINITIONS

High Quality Natural Area- Areas that include high quality native plant communities, highly restorable native plant communities or areas which provide critical wildlife habitat. An on-site evaluation for each proposed site is necessary in making this determination.

Project Sponsor- The local club or organization responsible for the day to day operations of the park to include but not limited to maintenance of trails, signing, fencing and equipment repair.

## LAND ACQUISITION POLICY DRAFT

- I The OHV Program Coordinator, County Conservation Representative and a State OHV Representative shall complete a preliminary site visit.
- II The area shall provide adequate user capacity for OHV recreation. Capacity shall be addressed in the operational agreement. Consideration shall be given to population and distance to other OHV facilities.
- III Appraisal & Sale
  - A. A certified appraiser shall appraise the property.
  - B. The land must be available for appraised value or less.
  - C. Seller must be willing to wait up to one year before the sale is complete.
- IV Operations
  - A. Strong local project sponsor support shall be necessary.
  - B. The project sponsor shall be willing and able to maintain the area on a voluntary basis.
  - C. The project sponsor shall abide by an operational plan set forth by the DNR with input from other interested parties. This plan shall be updated and reviewed annually.
  - D. A local sponsoring political subdivision shall oversee park operations.
  - E. A State OHV Association Representative, the OHV Program Coordinator and local sponsoring political subdivision shall determine the level of support, willingness and ability of the local project sponsor to maintain an area.
- V Adjoining Properties
  - A. All affected property owners shall be notified in writing of the proposed OHV area.
  - B. Property owners who support or oppose the project shall be requested to provide individually prepared written statements outlining specific reasons for their position. The issues raised by the opposition shall be satisfactorily addressed prior to the acquisition of the property. All written statements shall be made available to the NRC and Director at the time of their project review. Oral statements shall be made at the NRC meeting and at the public informational meeting at which time the comments shall be recorded in the minutes.
- VI It shall be determined if cultural, historical or high quality natural areas are present on the proposed OHV area. It shall also be determined if special concern species or any State or Federal threatened or endangered species inhabit the proposed OHV area. An expert in the said field shall evaluate each site utilizing all available resources in making this determination. If historical, cultural, critical wildlife habitats or high quality natural areas exist as fragments, they shall be managed and contained as off limit sites. The DNR, local project sponsor and other interested parties shall provide protection and management of these off limit sites through the implementation of an operational agreement.
- VII Grade & Soil
  - A. The grade shall be cost effectively manageable. This determination shall be made by the OHV Program Coordinator and the OHV Grant Review Committee.
  - B. Soil survey reports shall indicate the general soil classification of the area to be of moderate risk or less for path or trail development. NRCS staff shall be consulted regarding trail and or park development.

- VIII A written narrative accompanying the grant request shall minimally address the following:  
Demand for the proposed area in relation to population and other riding areas, potential expansion, partnership possibilities and local support.
- IX A public informational meeting shall be held to address the proposed OHV Park. The meeting shall be posted according to Iowa Code Section 362.3 Publication of Notices. As a minimum, neighbors and known interested parties shall be notified and invited to attend the meeting and provide inputs either orally or in writing.
- X The Director and NRC shall make the final determination of whether the proposed site meets this policy. Information including letters for or against the area, public meeting minutes, on-site evaluation reports and any other material related to the proposed area shall be made available to them.
- XI If any of the aforementioned requirements can not be met, the property shall not be considered for acquisition.